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**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**EVALUATION OF A SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTION
PROGRAMME FOR SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN OF
DIVORCE**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the Masters in Social
Science degree
(Research Psychology)**

April 2009

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ABSTRACT

Currently, parental separation in South Africa affects an estimated 30 000 children under the age of 18 annually. These children spend a great part of their day at school where they have to interact with peers and teachers and are expected to perform academically, but parental separation could have a significant impact on their ability to do so. Although research has found that children can be adversely affected by parental divorce, schools in South Africa do not offer any group interventions in an attempt to assist and guide children through what could be an ordeal for them.

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the school-based Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (CODIP) at two South African schools. CODIP is a preventively oriented 12-week group programme for nine to twelve year old children. The aims of the programme are to create a supportive group atmosphere in which children can share divorce-related feelings and clarify misconceptions about divorce. Participants are also taught problem-solving, communication and anger management skills. Twenty-five boys of divorce from two schools (ages 10 to 13 years) were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one delayed intervention control group.

The boys' understanding of divorce was assessed through the completion of the Children's Belief about Parental Separation (CBAPS) scale. The Self Perception Profile for Children (SPPC) was used to assess children's perceptions of themselves, while the Parent-Child Interaction Questionnaire for Children (PACIQ-R-CH) was employed to determine the boys' perceptions of their families. Questionnaires to determine the boys' general adjustment were completed by the boys, teachers and parents. Boys completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), teachers the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS), the AML-R Behaviour Rating Scale and the SDQ, and parents completed the Parent-Child Rating Scale (P-CRS) and the SDQ.

The experimental group for this study consisted of two separate groups, run independently by the educational psychologist at School A and the counsellor at School B. The child, teacher and parent responses from these two groups were combined for the purpose of analysing the data.

Post-programme results indicated no statistically significant decline in problem behaviours and children's perceptions of divorce in the experimental group relative to the control group on child-completed questionnaires. Compared to the control group, the experimental group revealed statistically significant improvement after intervention on teacher ratings of the full T-CRS score and on the full score of parent ratings of the SDQ and P-CRS. The Peer Social Skills subscale of the T-CRS as well as the Frustration Tolerance subscale of the P-CRS indicated a statistically significant decline in problem behaviours in the experimental group. The results of this study suggest that South African children who experience parental separation would benefit from participation in the school-based Children of Divorce Intervention Programme.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Families are support systems where trust and bonds develop. Secure family environments and emotionally responsive parents provide the physical and emotional stability for children to develop. However, if these systems collapse, children may face changes in their family relationships, standard of living, neighbourhood and friends. This can have a serious impact on a child's developmental tasks. The collapse of the family structure as a result of divorce can be an unsettling experience for the children involved as they have to deal with feelings of insecurity and abandonment. If not dealt with effectively, divorce can lead to problematic adjustment in the years following the break-up (Pedro-Carroll, 2001).

Figures from Statistics South Africa (2006) indicate that the number of recorded divorces in 2006 totalled 31 270. The 2006 data indicate that 61% of divorces involved couples with children under the age of 18, accounting for 30 242 children affected by marital disruption in 2006 alone. For marriages that had lasted for 5 to 9 years, the majority of divorces involved at least one minor child.

According to Amoateng, Richter, Makiwane, and Rama (2004), the quality and stability of family relationships directly influence a child's behaviour, social competence and academic achievement. Divorce may therefore seriously affect a

child's stress levels, because it influences where and how children live, what resources are available to them and whether they maintain family, school and friendship ties. Thompson et al. (as cited in Ayalon & Flasher, 1993) mention that post-divorce changes have several major effects, which are noticeable at school. These include reluctance to disclose divorce-related stress and abuse, decline in academic performance, changes in concentration level and changes in ability to communicate with teachers or peers. As Ayalon and Flasher (1993) point out, it often becomes the school's responsibility to provide children with a sound intellectual and emotional base when the family fails to provide these because of its own emotional and psychological deficiencies. Amato and Keith (1991) therefore encourage the importance of developing and evaluating therapeutic and educational programmes for divorcing families because of the persisting aversive effects divorce can have on a child.

1.2 Overview of the dissertation

The literature review examines the research done on the stressors of the divorce process, which include aspects such as stress of the initial separation, parental conflict and diminished parenting after divorce, loss of important relationships and the stress of reduced economic opportunities. The inclusion of a section on remarriage and repartnering is supported by a study done by Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan and Anderson (1989) who point out that children experience various forms of family reorganisation and family experiences following the divorce of their parents.

The section on the effects of divorce on children looks at how divorce affects children's academic performance, internalising and externalising problems and problems with social relationships. Resiliency and how it is supported by intervention programmes in general is also investigated. This chapter concludes with an in-depth discussion of the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme and previous evaluations thereof.

The Method chapter includes sections on the setting where this study was conducted and the composition of the sample. Two sets of measures were employed for this study. The first set of measures assessed children's perceptions of themselves as individuals affected by their parents' divorce, their families and the divorce process itself. The second set of measures assessed the overall adjustment changes in children resulting from participating in the programme.

Results are categorised into summaries of children's, teachers' and parents' responses to the questionnaires. Tables in this section represent the total problems scores and also a breakdown of the scores on the various subscales. Changes from pre-to post intervention as observed by children, parents and teachers from the experimental and intervention delayed control group are compared.

A discussion of the results follows where the main findings of this study are summarised and compared to other relevant studies. Also included in this chapter is a presentation of the limitations and suggestions for future research based on the findings of this study. The discussion concludes with a summary of the main

contributions from this study and their implications for future implementation of the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Search strategy

The majority of material for the literature review was accessed using the University of Cape Town's e-resources for journals and databases. Databases used were ERIC, ProQuest Educational Journals, PsycARTICLES and PsycINFO. Search terms used for extracting relevant full-text articles were: 'divorce'; 'children and divorce'; 'divorce and children and intervention'; 'divorce and children and effects'; children of divorce intervention programme'; and 'resiliency'. The reference lists of retrieved studies were then examined. In addition, specific online journals were searched for relevant articles. These included the Journal of Marriage and Family, Journal of Family Psychology, Child Development, Journal of Child and Family Studies and Journal of Family Psychology. Books from the University of Cape Town Library as well as information supplied by the Children's Institute in Rochester, New York were also used as sources of information for this study.

The vast volume of research available internationally on children of divorce proved to be one of the greatest challenges in the search for relevant literature. Search terms which generated the most information, were 'divorce and children'; 'divorce and effects'; and "divorce and intervention'. Most of the research retrieved consisted of divorce studies conducted in the USA and Western Europe, particularly Germany and the Netherlands. Research studies on intervention programmes for children and mothers experiencing divorce were predominantly from the USA.

One limitation of the search strategies used is that, while careful consideration was put into the selection of search terms, it is possible that there could have been other terms, which could have yielded more information. Another limitation is that information accessed and utilised in this study reached as far back as 1985, when intervention programmes for divorce were first developed and investigated. This made it difficult to obtain certain full-text articles.

2.2 Key concepts

Divorce

The dissolution of a marriage. For the purposes of this study divorce is regarded as the period from the time of separation to the period after the legal divorce.

Divorced family

A family where the father and mother no longer live together as a result of the legal dissolution of their marriage.

Children of divorce

Children whose parents' marriage is legally dissolved.

Intervention

The act of intervening, especially a deliberate entry into a situation in order to prevent undesirable outcomes (Encarta Dictionary Tools).

Internalising behaviour

Emotional distress such as depression, anxiety and general unhappiness (Simons, Lin, Gordon, Conger, & Lorenz, 1999).

Externalising behaviour

Misbehaviour, aggression towards others and delinquent behaviour (Simons et al., 1999).

Resilience

Demonstrated competence in the context of significant challenges to adaptation (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Risk factor

A personal or environmental characteristic that is associated with an increased probability of negative outcomes (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch, & Ungar, 2005).

Protective factor

Enhances good outcomes under conditions of risk and adversity.

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2.3 Stressors of the Divorce process

Divorce does not only signal the end of a primary relationship, but also impairs the wider social support network of which the family has been a part and on which they previously relied in difficult times (Braude & Fancisco-La-Grange, 1993). During this often stressful family transition, parents are often focused on their own problems. This may result in a weakened capacity to parent and children receiving less support than they need. As children experience the dissolution of their families, they are faced with several family transitions, which can be very stressful and have a significant impact on their psychological well-being (Hetherington & Stanley Hagan, 1999).

Stressors of the divorce process which may affect children include the stress of the initial separation, parental conflict, diminished parenting, children's loss of important relationships, reduced economic opportunities, and the effect of the parents' remarriage or repartnering.

2.3.1 Stress of the Initial Separation

In a study done by Dunn, Davies, O'Connor and Sturgess (2001) on parent-child communication about divorce, 23% of the children said they had not been informed about the divorce, 45% said they had only been given one-or two-line explanations and only 5% of children interviewed said they had been fully informed about the divorce and were encouraged to ask questions. Some parents seem unable to provide valuable information about the far-reaching changes in family structure, living arrangements and parent-child relationships, leaving children with a sense of isolation and cognitive and emotional confusion (Dunn et al., 2001). Many children feel that the changes in their family lives had not been explained to them; that they were

confused by the situation, and would have liked to have had the opportunity to ask questions (Dunn et al., 2001).

Although researchers such as Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) and Amato (2003) agree that the effects of divorce on children may in some cases extend well into adulthood, Kelly and Emery (2003) state that it is the initial period following divorce that has the greatest impact on children and their development. In some cases, the stress experienced by children predates the act of divorce because of high levels of conflict and violence in the marriage (Amato, 2005). However, according to Kelly and Emery (2003) and Braude and Francisco-La Grange (1993), the majority of children appear to have little emotional preparation for their parent's divorce, leading them to react with distress, anxiety, anger, shock and disbelief. Comments from children whose parents had not told them before include "I started looking for Dad's clothes and discovered they were not there," and "My mother fetched me from school and told me Dad had gone to live somewhere else" (Braude & Francisco-La Grange, 1993, p. 31).

In a study done at three schools in Johannesburg by Braude and Francisco-La Grange (1993) on support systems in the life situation of children of divorce, 57% of the respondents said that life had become more difficult since their parents' divorce. 18% reported that they found life easier after divorce, 2% did not know and 24% were ambivalent, saying in some ways it was easier and in other ways more difficult.

Braude and Francisco-La Grange (1993) also found that 60 % of the children in their study considered not having a united family as the greatest negative aspect of divorce. Children now have to deal with the logistics and emotions of transitioning between two households, having to integrate and adapt to unfamiliar schedules, rules and

environments imposed on them (Kelly & Lamb, 2000; Smart & Neale, 2000). Apart from the physical movement from one home to another, children must also make the shift from one psychological space to another, having to deal with different rules and the anger toward the other parent (Smart, 2002).

Another stressor in the child's initial adjustment to two separate homes is visiting arrangements that may not developmentally attuned to his or her social and psychological needs. This is particularly true for younger children who lack the cognitive, language and emotional maturity to understand the major disruptions in their lives (Kelly & Lamb, 2000).

2.3.2 Parental Conflict

According to Schick (2002), children's adjustment to divorce is not only influenced by individual and contextual factors, but also by the relations between family members, particularly parents. Although conflict is a natural part of the process of ending a relationship and disengaging emotionally, Grych and Fincham (1990, 1992) provide evidence that conflict involving child-related content poses a threat to children's well-being and can account for as much as 25% of externalising behaviours and 10% of internalising behaviours. These findings are supported by a study done by Long, Slater, Forehand and Faber (1988) who found that only when interparental conflict remained high after the divorce did children from divorced families exhibit higher levels of anxiety and poorer school performance compared to children from intact families.

According to Grych (2005), post-divorce conflict is likely to be about child-related issues, as children remain the primary bond between parents and thus the main issue to fight over. Studies done by Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (1991) and Johnston (1994) show that high conflict is likely to be more destructive after the divorce if parents use their children to express their anger and if parents are verbally and physically aggressive toward each other on the telephone or in person. Parents also create stress and loyalty conflicts in children when they ask them to carry hostile messages or if they prohibit mention of the other parent in their presence. Buchanan et al. (1991) have found that children whose parents partook in such behaviour were more depressed and anxious compared to children whose parents left them out of their angry feuds. Children whose parents do not use them as pawns in their conflict with the other parent are less likely to manifest negative adjustment outcomes such as depression, deviance and anxiety (Buchanan et al., 1991).

The degree of marital conflict may not only negatively affect children's peer relations at school, but also their interpretation of social situations and interpersonal relations. (Cummings & Davies, 1994). Furthermore, Long et al. (1988) have found that marital conflict also affects academic performance, which is manifested in problems of academic achievement and abilities.

2.3.3 Diminished Parenting after Divorce

According to Amato (2000), the quality of parental functioning is one of the best predictors of children's behaviour and well-being after divorce. The negative impact of high conflict on a child's adjustment is significantly mediated through incompetent parenting of both mothers and fathers. Parents are often too emotionally overwhelmed

by the divorce to function effectively, which may severely affect children's adjustment during and after the divorce (Kenny, 2000). During the first couple of years after separation, parents are often pre-occupied with their own responses to the divorce and with the challenge of integrating single parenthood with work demands and social needs. As a result, they may lose sight of the family as a whole, which could lead to a decrease in parental attention and supervision (Amato & Keith, 1991; Kelly & Emery, 2003).

Hetherington (1999) and Krishnakamur and Buehler (2000) report that mothers in high-conflict marriages are less warm and more rejecting, and use harsher discipline, while fathers tend to withdraw more from their children. Children living with a depressed, character-disordered parent after the divorce are clearly at risk as their emotional, social and academic adjustment may seriously be impaired by the actions of such a parent (Hetherington, 1999). What may make matters worse, is that after divorce there are few opportunities for competent non-resident parents to protect the children against the behaviours of such troubled custodial parents and the positive influence of the non-resident parent diminishes over time (Hetherington, 1999).

According to Hetherington (1999), boys appear to experience more angry exchanges and contentious relationships with their custodial mothers compared with girls. Amato (2005) ascribes this to the fact that boys are believed to be tougher and because they may resemble their fathers as the male figure in the house. Boys also experience a greater decline in the quality of the home environment after the divorce than girls. Explanations offered by Kelly and Emery (2003) for this decline are that the mother-son relationship is more coercive after divorce and fathers usually spend more time

with their sons than with their daughters during marriage. These emotional and physical interactions typically diminish or cease completely after divorce.

Hetherington (1999) claims that the most characteristic aspect of diminished parenting is that children experience less positive involvement with the custodial parent and more erratic and harsh discipline. To make matters worse, children's own increased anger and confusion makes it even more difficult for distressed single parents to maintain effective parenting practises (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

2.3.4 Loss of Important Relationships

The loss of important relationships, especially with the sudden departure of the father, is cited by Kelly and Emery (2003) as a significant stressor for children of divorce and adds to a child's sense of loss. Children have described the loss of contact with a parent as the single most negative aspect of divorce (Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Lauman-Billings & Emery, 2000; Pryor & Rodgers, 2001).

Although Amato (2003) claims that research on the effect of the frequency of visitation of non-custodial parents on children's well-being is inconsistent, children may perceive reduced time spent with a non-custodial parent as a loss of parental support, and perceived unavailability of a custodial parent as a lack of interest (Rodgers & Rose, 2002). Hetherington and Kelly (in Kelly & Lamb, 2000) have found that between 18% and 25% of children in the USA have no contact with their fathers two to three years after the divorce. Kelly and Lamb (2000) suggest this may lead a child to perceive that he or she is less important to the father. This perception could lead to diminished closeness and meaning in the relationship between father and child. Research has found that boys especially would like to spend more time with

their fathers than is negotiated or ordered as they still regard them as important and significant in their lives (Hetherington, 1999; Pryor & Rodgers, 2001).

2.3.5 Reduced Economic Opportunities

Research indicates that divorce can substantially reduce the standard of living of custodial parents and their children (Hutchinson & Spangler-Hirsch, 1989). According to McLanahan (1999), even non-poor families at the time of divorce lose on average roughly 50% of their income. This may force the pre-divorce stay-at-home mother to enter the workforce or work longer hours, affecting her ability to nurture and supervise her children. McLanahan (1999) states that when parents divorce, children are often at a financial disadvantage because it is more expensive for a once intact family to be spread-out over two households. The newly established household - usually headed by the father - tends to receive a disproportionate share of the divided financial resources even though the original household, run by the mother, has more members (McLanahan, 1999).

McLanahan (1999) provides several possible factors for the inequitable distribution of funds. This first factor is that child support standards vary widely and payment is often not enforced. The second factor is the diminished emotional attachment of fathers once they have moved out. Fathers can lose touch with their children's needs if they do not see them on a regular basis. Possible new commitments such as a second wife and stepchildren may also make a father feel less compelled to provide financial support to his original family. A non-resident father may also be reluctant to pay child support as it goes directly to his ex-wife, someone he may distrust or dislike.

Reduced economic opportunities may lead to changes in where the children live, which in turn, affects the quality of their schooling, friendships and childcare arrangements (Kelly & Emery, 2003; McLanahan, 1999). Research showing that the payment of child support is positively related to children's school attainment and behaviour provides additional support for the importance of economic resources in facilitating children's post-divorce adjustment. (McLanahan, Seltzer, Hanson & Thompson in Amato, 2000).

According to Lansford et al. (2006), the more a child is involved in activities outside the family context, the less likely it will be that divorce will have long-term effects on a child's adjustment. This view corresponds with Kelly and Emery (2003) who state that diminished income after the divorce may result in children not able to participate in as many extra-mural activities that previously brought meaning to their lives. Single parents may also be unable to buy their children the consumer goods, such as label clothing and cell phones, that give their children status among their peers.

2.3.6 Remarriage and Repartnering

Hetherington et al. (1989) claim that 75% of divorced mothers and 80% of divorced fathers remarry. Research has also found that the divorce rate in remarriages is slightly higher than in first marriages and can occur more quickly (Coleman, Ganong & Fine, 2000). Kelly and Emery (2003) report that remarriage does not necessarily diminish the effects of divorce on children, but rather adds to the continuing series of changes and disruptions in family and emotional relationships. For some, these new relationships imply the potential for further family conflict, anger in the stepparent-child relationship and role ambiguities. Many children could thus be exposed to a

series of unsettling family transitions and household reorganisations following their parents' initial divorce (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

After an initial period of distress following divorce, most children and parents adjust to their single-parent situation within two to three years (Clingempeel, Brand, & Ievoli, 1984; Hetherington, 1989; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan & Anderson, 1989). However, remarriage of the custodial parent within three to five years after getting divorced usually disrupts the equilibrium of the new family structure and the period it takes for children to adjust may be longer than that for divorce (Hetherington et al., 1989). Children becoming part of a reconstituted family must give up hope of reunification, may question the new stepparent's authority and may feel that the parent-child relationship established after the divorce is now threatened (Hetherington, 1989). Apart from the above problems some children in remarried families still exhibit divorce-related problem behaviours such as aggressiveness, noncompliance and acting-out. There are also still problems of poor academic achievement as well as disruptions in peer relations (Bronstein et al., 1994; Hetherington, 1989; Hetherington et al., 1989).

Stepfamilies can, however, function successfully and have a positive effect on children's adjustment and development. A study done by Bronstein et al. (1994) found that in stepfather households, a high level of contact and involvement by noncustodial fathers resulted in more positive self-concept, particularly for boys. Children's classroom behaviour also improved and they exhibited fewer psychological problems. Bronstein et al. (1994) suggest that it may be that noncustodial fathers' ongoing presence tends to enhance children's sense of self-

worth and security, knowing that he will always be there even though there is another man in the family. These findings confirm a study done by Hetherington (1989) in which it was found that boys whose mothers had been remarried for over two years were showing no more aggressive, noncompliant behaviour than were boys from intact families.

Other factors Bronstein et al. (1994) associated with remarriage and children's adjustment are stepfathers' parenting behaviours and an effective co-parenting partnership. The more stepfathers were perceived as involved in parenting, approving, supportive and interested, the more likely children were to have a higher self-concept, improved classroom behaviour and fewer psychological problems. It would appear from the literature that although children may experience their parents' marital rearrangements as stressful, divorce and remarriage can remove them from stressful family relationships and provide them with additional resources to emerge as competent and well-adjusted individuals.

2.4 The Effects of Divorce on Children

Risk factors describe those circumstances that increase the likelihood that a child will experience negative outcomes and problem behaviours in a given situation (Armstrong et al., 2005). Several longitudinal studies (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004), meta-analyses (Amato & Keith, 1991) and reviews (Amato, 2005; Amato, 2003; Hipke, Wolchik, Sandler & Braver, 2002; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Rodgers & Rose, 2002; Schick, 2002) indicate, although in varying degrees, that the stress children experience during and after divorce generally manifests itself negatively in terms of

behaviour, emotion, self-esteem, academic failure, social relations and psychosomatic disorders. However, research focusing on the extreme variability of children's reactions have found that there are no uniform or typical effects of divorce (Hetherington et al., 1989).

2.4.1 Academic performance

Children spend a considerable portion of their day at school. It is therefore not surprising that those distressed by the divorce of their parents usually show signs of impaired concentration and academic performance (Rodgers & Pryor, 1998), which results in children from continuously married families having higher academic scores than children from divorced families (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

In a study commissioned by the Ministry of Education in the United Kingdom on academic performance and children of divorce, the criteria used were direct measures of performance on achievement-based tests and attainment of qualifications, such as successfully passing a grade (Rodgers & Pryor, 1998). Less direct measures such as school attendance and perceived problems by teachers and the children themselves were also considered. Rodgers and Pryor (1998) also found significant differences relating to academic aspirations and motivation between children of divorce and children from intact families with the former scoring lower on related measures.

Although Kaye (1989) and Rodgers and Pryor (1998) found that children from divorced families experience problems with schoolwork, Kaye (1989) makes a further distinction between the scholastic performance and adjustment of boys and girls. He found that in the fifth year following divorce, both the grades and the achievement test

scores of boys from divorced families seemed to be adversely affected, whereas no adverse effects on grades and test scores were found for girls. Reasons offered by Kaye (1989) for these gender differences are the adverse effects on boys of the loss of a male role model of problem-solving and achievement and changes in boys' self control in the absence of a father figure. As a result, boys may be more disruptive in class and consequently they may receive less support from teachers when experiencing academic difficulties. Evidence also suggests that boys from divorced families are less likely to be prepared for lessons and complete assignments in the first five years following the separation. They also tend to be more inattentive during lessons. All of these factors result in poorer academic performance (Kaye, 1989). However, in a pooled time-series study done by Sun and Li (2002), very little evidence was found for gender differences in the effects divorce has on children's academic performance.

A study done by Kinard and Reinherz (1989) highlights the inconsistency in research on children's academic performance and their age at the time of parental separation. Research done by Lansford et al. (2006) supports earlier findings by Kaye (1989) that poor academic performance as a result of the parent's divorce, only affects children at a younger age. In contrast, Lansford et al. (2006) found that parental divorce has a more significant effect on children's academic performance if it occurs later (grade 6 onwards) rather than earlier, presumably because the stress of the divorce coincides with a time when grading standards become increasingly stringent. The increased pressures of both these events may be quite overwhelming for the child and as a result may influence his or her academic performance.

2.4.2 Internalising and Externalising Problems

Evidence from a myriad of studies suggests that the stress of parental divorce can manifest itself negatively in children's behaviour in the classroom and at home (Amato, 2005, 2000; Amato & Keith, 1991; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Lansford et al., 2006; Schick, 2002; Simons et al., 1999). Amato and Keith (1991), Amato (2001, 2005), Harland, Reijneveld, Brugman, Verloove-Vanhorick and Verhulst (2002), and Malone, Lansford and Castellino (2004) have found that children who have experienced the life event of a divorce are at high risk for exhibiting both internalising and externalising problems. According to Hetherington (1999), the extent of risk for divorced children is at least twice that of children from continuously married parents, with the largest effects seen in externalising symptoms, such as conduct disorders, anti-social behaviour and problems with authority figures and parents (Kelly & Emery, 2003). Less pronounced differences were found concerning internalising symptoms such as anxiety, depression and self-esteem (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

Externalising problems involve misbehaviour, aggression toward others, noncompliant, acting-out, and delinquent behaviours both at home and at school, poor academic performance and disruptions in peer relations (Amato, 2001; Grych & Fincham, 1992; Hetherington, 1989; Pedro-Carroll, 2001; Rodgers & Rose, 2002). In a critical evaluation of intervention efforts by Grych and Fincham (1992), the authors argue that perhaps the most consistent finding regarding children's post-divorce adjustment is the higher incidence of externalising problems compared to children from intact families. In support of the arguments raised by Grych and Fincham (1992), the univariate analyses for externalising problems conducted by Harland et al.

(2002) showed that children from divorced families are at a higher risk of exhibiting externalising problems than internalising problems.

Although perhaps less observable and therefore less frequently investigated, internalising problems such as emotional distress, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, withdrawal, and general unhappiness have also been reported in children of divorce (Amato, 2001; Grych & Fincham, 1992; Rodgers & Rose, 2002; Simons et al., 1999). Research done by Lansford et al. (2006) supports the general conclusion that children who experience parental divorce during their elementary school years exhibit more externalising and internalising problems during the initial transition period following divorce.

Demo and Acock (1988) and Patterson, DeBaryshe and Ramsey (1989) attribute children's internalising and externalising problems to changes in parental management techniques after the divorce, such as less effective and consistent discipline, less monitoring and more parent-child conflict. Depressive/withdrawn parenting from the custodial parent may play an important part in the adjustment problems children from divorced families' experience. If a child perceives his/her mother as sad, self-oriented and withdrawn, it may evoke a sense of isolation and rejection, which the child then has to deal with. In an attempt to regain the mother's attention, the child engages in negative behaviour. As such, disruptive behaviour may attract the attention of an otherwise busy and pre-occupied mother or other adult caregivers such as teachers or extended family members. By gaining such attention, the disruptive behaviour is reinforced and heightened, and then becomes a stable

pattern of behaviour over time, resulting in externalising behavioural problems (Wood, Repetti, & Roesch, 2004).

Children may find this time in their lives difficult because they may be less capable of realistically assessing the causes and consequences of divorce. They may also feel more anxious about abandonment, be more likely to blame themselves and be less likely to make effective use of outside resources (Hetherington, 1989). Wallerstein (2005) have also found that some of the chronic uncertainties the child experiences immediately after the divorce result in anxiety and a feeling of insecurity. A study done by Schick (2002) on behavioural and emotional differences between children of divorce and intact families, revealed that divorced parents rated their children more negatively for social anxiety and behaviour than did parents from intact families. Schick (2002) explained children of divorce's increased social anxiety as a result of their efforts to avoid discussing the embarrassing subject of their parents' separation with peers and other outsiders.

The inter-parental conflict perspective proposed by Amato (1993) suggests that the behaviour problems children exhibit after the divorce result from the parental conflict that precedes or follows parental divorce and not so much from the divorce event itself. The process of modelling is a mechanism through which parental conflict is expected to result in negative behaviour in children (Amato, Loomis & Booth, 1994). The basic principle of modelling theory is that children tend to imitate their parents. (Bandura in Jekielek, 1998). Therefore, children who are exposed to their parents' conflict and who have a tendency for aggression may engage in long lasting and more frequent acts of aggression (Jekielek, 1998). High levels of parental conflict also

affect the emotional well-being of the children involved (Grych & Fincham, 1992). A stressful home environment is likely to increase a child's anxiety, which may have an effect on his or her peer relations and ability to concentrate on schoolwork. Also, patterns of maternal depression or withdrawal may affect a child's ability to interact with peers, having significant repercussions for self-esteem and later peer relations (Jekielek, 1998). Results from a study conducted by Strohschein (2005) indicated that compared to children from intact families, children whose parents divorced over the course of the study exhibited slightly higher levels of anxiety and depression prior to the divorce, with a further increase in response to divorce itself.

Vandervalk, Spruijt, de Goede, Maas, and Meeus (2005), Sun and Li (2002) and Sun (2001) found little or no evidence for gender differences in the adjustment process. However, some research supports the notion that gender and age may have significant effects on children's general adjustment to divorce, with boys scoring moderately higher than girls on externalising behaviours, while the opposite is true for internalising behaviours (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991; Malone et al., 2004; Rodgers & Rose, 2002). In a study done by Malone et al. (2004), it was found that boys who were in elementary school when their parents divorced, showed an increase in externalising behaviour problems in the year of the divorce, which continued in the years thereafter. The study reported that regardless of the timing of their parents' divorce, girls' externalising problems were not affected. These findings corroborate with research done by Hetherington (1989), who found that divorce is linked to more adjustment problems for boys than girls and Amato (2001) who reported that boys showed slightly larger effect sizes for conduct problems than girls. From the above

findings it can be concluded that divorce affects boys somewhat more negatively than girls on externalising behaviours.

Contradictory to these findings, Simons et al. (1999) found evidence that parental divorce increased a boy's chances of becoming depressed regardless of the quality of parenting or level of parental conflict. Their study found that if mothers are able to engage in competent parenting after the divorce, girls from divorced families are at no greater risk for depression than girls living in intact families. On the other hand, the study found boys from divorced families to show higher rates of depression than boys from intact families, even with competent maternal parenting. The reason offered by Simons et al. (1999), is that having the father leave the home may be more traumatic for boys than for girls.

Schick (2002) conducted a study to determine the clinical significance of behavioural and emotional differences between children of divorce and children from intact families. He found that children of divorce evaluated their behaviour as less self-confident than did children from intact families. Also, ten of the seventeen comparisons concerning behaviour problems as evaluated by divorced parents, yielded statistically significant differences. Significant differences between divorced and intact families were also found with regards to social anxiety and unstable academic performance.

2.4.3 Social Relationships

2.4.3.1 Sibling Relationships

Hetherington (1989) offers two possible outcomes for siblings and the effect their parents' divorce may have on their relationships. Siblings can become embroiled in rivalry and hostility (externalising behaviours), as they have to compete for fewer financial resources and diminished parental love and attention after their parents' divorce. Alternatively, siblings may turn to each other for support and solace after their parents' separation if they experience their parents as unstable and unapproachable.

In a 6-year follow-up of a longitudinal study of divorce and remarriage by Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1985), which included 124 of the original 144 families, Hetherington (1989) presented four main findings in sibling relationships after parental separation:

- Siblings in stepfamilies and boys from divorced families exhibited more problematic relationships than siblings in non-divorced families or girls from divorced families. Boys and siblings in stepfamilies were found to be more aggressive and avoidant, and less warm and involved than the other siblings. Compared to stepchildren, sons in divorced families more commonly exhibited reciprocated aggression and long chains of aggressive and coercive behaviours with siblings, especially if the target sibling was a boy.
- Although sibling relationships in stepfamilies improved over time, they were still more dysfunctional than relationships in non-divorced or divorced families. Female children in stepfamilies in particular continued behaviours of

disengagement and avoidance toward their siblings, even two years after remarriage.

- A brother-sister sibling combination was marked by more discord than a sister-sister combination. Boys were regarded by their sisters as exhibiting more aversive behaviour and as a result boys received very little support from their sisters.
- Older girls in divorced families were found to play a more supportive and nurturing role in their relationships with their younger sisters, which was associated with increased prosocial behaviour, lower externalising and better peer relationships for both parties.

Hetherington (1989) concluded that although warmth support and involvement may protect siblings from the adverse effects of parental separation; sibling rivalry, aggression and disengagement from siblings played an even greater role in increasing externalising and antisocial behaviour in divorced and remarried families.

2.4.3.2 Peer Relationships

Dunn et al. (2001) found evidence that children from divorced families who have poor parent-child relationships or who are often involved in inter-parent conflict are unlikely to confide in peers or form close and affectionate friendships, leaving them more vulnerable to the possible effects of divorce. The study by Dunn et al. (2001) furthermore supported evidence that children living with single mothers had less frequent contact with friends than did children from intact families. Possible explanations offered by Dunn et al. (2001) for this diminished contact with friends are that children from divorce families are possibly more involved in family and other

household activities, or that they have fewer resources available to them. Some children remarked that they find it awkward to bring friends home because of the family circumstances.

A study done by Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1979) suggests that the impact of divorce extends beyond the family and home into play and social relationships in the school situation. The longitudinal study conducted by Hetherington et al. (1979) on the effects of divorce on play and social interaction in children, found evidence of disruptive social functioning in children following the divorce of their parents. At both two months and one year after divorce, boys from divorced families initiated attempts to interact with their peers. However, many of these attempts at becoming involved in a group were negative and involved negative demands, physical and verbal aggression, and complaining (Hetherington et al., 1979). Two years after the divorce of their parents, boys were making fewer, but more positive initiations to interact with their peers (Hetherington et al., 1979). However, their peers did not accept these attempts to become part of the group nor did they make any initiations to involve the boys from divorced families. The reason for this could be that Hetherington et al. (1979) found that even one year after their parents' divorce boys from divorced families were still viewed by their peers as aggressive, less socially constructive and less popular than were boys from intact families. What remains clear from the studies done by Dunn et al. (2001) and Hetherington et al. (1979) is that the transition period following divorce could be stressful for children when interacting with their peers and that support systems need to be developed to assist children in particular to adjust to the stresses and changes associated with divorce.

2.5 Child Characteristics as Predictors of Post-divorce Adjustment

Research done by Amato (2006), Grych and Fincham (1992), Hetherington (1989), and Hetherington et al. (1989) provide support for the idea that certain child characteristics such as gender, age and temperament and personality can be related to children's adjustment to divorce.

2.5.1 Gender

Research on whether gender is significant in children's adjustment to their parents' divorce appears to be inconclusive. The meta-analysis of Amato and Keith (1991) and studies conducted by Simons et al. (1999), and Amato (2005) found that divorce had stronger effects on boys than on girls in some domains. On the other hand, Amato (2001) concludes in his update of the 1991 meta-analysis that divorce is associated with a range of poor outcomes among all children, irrespective of gender. This finding concurs with studies done by Schick (2002) and Sun and Li (2002) in which they found that gender and divorce yielded no significant interactions, that is boys and girls were equally negatively affected by divorce.

However, a recent study by Amato (2006) on the implications of divorce after children have reached adulthood revealed a significant interaction between gender and divorce. Divorce appeared to generally lower the quality of the relationship between father and child regardless of gender, but the decline was twice as large for daughters than it was for boys (.65 of a standard deviation for sons versus 1.36 of a standard deviation for daughters). These findings support research showing that in general the father-daughter relationship after divorce is more vulnerable than the father-son

relationship and that fathers are more likely to maintain contact with their sons than their daughters (Hetherington, 1999).

Grych and Fincham (1992) concluded that the question of whether gender plays a role in children's adjustment after divorce is complex and the answer depends on several factors such as the sex of the custodial parent, their parenting style, their marital status after the divorce, the quality of the parent-child relationship and the time spent with the non-custodial parent.

2.5.2 Age

Children's understanding of divorce and their ability to deal with the stress of their parents' separation is likely to be affected by their level of cognitive, emotional and social development (Grych & Fincham, 1992). Wallerstein (2005) reported that pre-school children tend to regress behaviourally, blame themselves for the divorce, and fear that they may be abandoned. Children who are in elementary school exhibit moderate depression and are preoccupied with the parent leaving the home. Children at this age also fear rejection and being replaced when one or both parents enter another relationship. Older children exhibit more angry behaviours and they tend to blame one of the parents for the break-up.

Research done by Amato (2006) revealed that if parental separation occurred when the children are still at pre- or elementary school, their educational attainment was relatively low (half a standard deviation below the mean). Educational attainment was close to the overall mean when divorce occurred during adolescence or early adulthood. It would appear from these results that divorces occurring during a child's

primary school years may disrupt their academic progress more than older children who have already established themselves as either weak or strong scholars.

Amato (2006) also drew a comparison between age at divorce and non-residential father-child relationships. The study found that children's relationships with their non-residential fathers were much weaker if the separation occurred during preschool years than if the divorce occurred during a child's early adulthood years. According to Amato (2006) it is difficult for fathers and their children to form strong emotional relationships when they are separated early in children's lives. However, if parents divorce later in a child's life, then children and fathers would have spent more time together during which close emotional relationships could have been formed.

Grych and Fincham (1992) conclude that when researchers investigate the correlation between age and the effects of divorce, they confound children's age at the time of divorce with the length of time passed since the divorce and their age at the time of assessment. This process makes it difficult to isolate the role of any of these factors. Grych and Fincham's (1992) evaluation concurs with Hetherington et al. (1989), and Amato (2006) that children's behaviour problems and coping mechanisms differ for children of different ages, but there is no period during which children are immune to the negative effects of parental divorce.

2.5.3 Temperament and Personality

Parental divorce may often be accompanied by high levels of stress experienced by the children involved (Amato, 2005; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Kenny, 2000; Schick, 2002; Sun & Li, 2002). The child's temperament is one of many individual characteristics that can either protect or make him or her vulnerable to the long-term

adverse effects of his or her parents' divorce (Hetherington, 1989). Temperamentally difficult and easy children coped equally well with abusive behaviour from parents when they were observed under conditions of low stress and the availability of social support (Hetherington, 1989). However, when temperamentally difficult children were placed under increased stress, they were less able to adapt to the situation, despite the presence of social support. Under the same conditions, Hetherington (1989) found temperamentally easy children to actually develop more adaptive skills when stress levels were moderate. The practise the temperamentally easy children had in solving stressful situations under supportive conditions improved their abilities to persist in difficult tasks, to be flexible and adaptive in problem-solving tasks and in social relations (Hetherington, 1989). These differences observed by Hetherington (1989) were more prevalent in children from divorced and remarried families than in children from intact families, and the effect for temperament was greater for boys than for girls.

According to Hetherington (1989), temperamentally difficult children are less adaptable to change than children with an easy temperament. However, as in the case of gender and age differences, the correlation between children's temperament and divorce adjustment appears to be moderated by other factors such as maternal stability, parent-child relationships, the levels of stress experienced and the availability of social support structures (Grych & Fincham, 1992; Hetherington, 1989). Hetherington (1989) found that mothers responded the same to difficult and easy tempered children under conditions of stable maternal personality and low stress. However, in the presence of both maternal personality problems and high levels of

stress, divorced mothers reacted more negatively towards temperamentally difficult children, especially if they were boys.

2.6 Resiliency and Children of Divorce

The most frequently quoted, and perhaps most applied definition of resiliency, is that of Masten, Best, and Garmezy (in Graham, 2004) who define resiliency as the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging and threatening circumstances. Rutter (2000) defines resilience in terms of a relatively good outcome despite the experience of situations that have been shown to carry major risk for the development of psychopathology. Perhaps the most apt definition in terms of resiliency for the purposes of this study is that of Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994, p.4) who define resiliency in terms of "...those factors and processes that interrupt the trajectory from risk to problem behaviours or psychopathology and thereby result in adaptive outcomes even in the presence of adversity."

Rutter (2000) states that resilience is not a fixed characteristic of individuals, but rather the result of several dynamic processes operating over time. Similarly, Pedro-Carroll (2005) emphasises that resilience does not imply invulnerability and cautions against general assumptions that it is a trait that all children possess, or that resiliency is an automatic outcome for children. Resilient children tend to possess certain personal capacities such as social competence, problem-solving skills, accurate attributions, and a realistic appraisal of their ability to overcome adverse events such as divorce in their lives (Graham, 2004; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Similarly, Sandler, Tein and West (1994) have found that active coping, which involves problem

solving and positive thinking, has been related to less depression and has been shown to mitigate the effect of stress on conduct problems. Family and extra-familial factors also operate to produce positive outcomes for children experiencing stressful life events. Family factors include protection from inter-parental conflict, supportive parent-child relationships, the psychological well-being of parents, and household stability and structure. Supportive relations with positive adult models, a community and school support network, and evidence-based intervention programmes providing support and skills training are extra-familial factors that can contribute to healthy post-divorce adjustment for children (Emery & Forehand in Sandler et al., 1994).

Hetherington (1989) found that peer relationships as a protective factor have no effect on pre-school children, but become more significant as children got older. The same study (Hetherington, 1989) found that children who were rejected by their peers or who did not have one good friend showed increased long term adjustment problems. However, the supportive presence of even one friend could moderate the adverse effects a child experiences as a result of parental separation (Hetherington, 1989).

Children's individual differences in their peer relationships and contact with other children and how it is linked to their family experiences were investigated by Dunn et. al (2001). One finding was that children with higher quality friendships confided more in their mothers and they also reported their relationships with their mothers as positive. Dunn et al. (2001) ascribed these effects between friendship and mother-child relationship to positive child characteristics such as sociability, confidence and social sensitivity, which generally elicit warmth and affection from within as well as from outside the family.

In support of the significance of peer relationships in the lives of children of divorce, Hetherington (1989) found that about one third of children disengage from the family after their parents' divorce and become more involved in activities at school or with the peer group. The effectiveness of this involvement outside the nuclear family as a possible protective factor against the effects of divorce depends on the type of activities and people with whom the child becomes involved (Hetherington, 1989). Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) are of the opinion that because children spend such a large part of their day at school, their experiences at school may affect them in multiple ways. They believe that the school environment has the potential either to increase children's risk or to equip them with the necessary skills to cope with and adapt to their situation. Therefore, the function of schools should not be to help children merely survive the potential negative effects of divorce, but to have structures in place to help children thrive in the aftermath thereof (Pedro-Carroll, 2001). Similarly, Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) propose that schools should employ intervention programmes that enhance children's capacity to deal with adverse situations, rather than programmes that are designed to eliminate or reduce risk factors related to a negative outcome.

Fuller, McGraw and Goodyear (in McGrath, 2000) suggest a focus on school-connectedness whereby schools establish structures which among other things, foster a sense of acceptance and belonging, ensure that students feel valued and supported and provide opportunities for successful and meaningful participation. In the light of findings by Amato and Keith, (1991) and Kelly and Emery (2003) that parents dealing with divorce tend to be pre-occupied with their own responses to divorce, schools are

ideal for providing such supportive resources in the form of intervention programmes to children of divorce who are in need thereof.

In essence, the central component of effective coping is a sense of being in control of one's destiny and feeling able to take effective actions to do whatever is required by challenging situations, an aspect that features prominently in many intervention programmes for children of divorce (Pedro-Carroll, 2005).

2.7 Resiliency and Intervention Programmes

A report on children's programmes on divorce and separation funded by the Canadian Department of Justice (British Columbia, 2003) states that the goals of programmes for children of divorce are all similar in that they aim to help children understand why the divorce happened; to help them make sense of their role in it; and to help them learn new coping strategies for dealing with upsetting feelings, parent-child conflict, visitation problems and other stressors.

Haine, Sandler, Wolchik, Tein and Dawson-McClure (2003) state that evidence from randomised experimental trials provides consistent support for the effectiveness of child programmes to change the legacy of divorce for children. Also mentioned is the possible amplified impact of a combined child and mother programme, which could reinforce important mediators such as parent-child relationships and effective parenting. However, Dishion, McCord and Poulin (1999) caution that adding components in other intervention contexts has failed to yield significant increased benefits, and that such a step may even reduce the benefits achieved in successful

single component programmes. Haine et al. (2003) stress the need for additional research to inform future programme design and evaluation. The authors encourage further investigation into resilience resources and risk factors associated with successful child programmes.

According to Haine et al. (2003), growing evidence for the efficacy of intervention programmes for children of divorce makes it necessary to move such evidence-based programmes into existing community institutions such as schools. McGrath (2000) and Haine et al. (2003) identify schools as a natural target for primary intervention in so far that divorced families are readily accessible, disruption is relatively easy to diagnose and intervention is relatively inexpensive to provide.

2.8 School-based Intervention Programmes

According to Emery, Kitmann and Waldron (1999), research on child-focused divorce interventions is very much limited to group therapy, specifically school-based groups. A possible explanation for this is that most schools lack the adequate financial and human resources to assist children with divorce-related problems on an individual basis (Grych & Fincham, 1992). Grych and Fincham (1992) mention several advantages for school-based divorce interventions for children. Apart from the number of children benefitting from group interventions compared to individual therapy, many parents from lower income groups cannot afford to send their children for individual therapy. The presence of peers and teachers also make schools a natural environment for providing support. Discussing divorce in a group setting with peers who have also experienced divorce normalises the experience and provides a

potentially supportive network for all group members (Lesowitz, Kalter, Pickar, Chetik, & Schaefer, 1987; Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985). Children of divorce are more likely than children from intact families to exhibit behaviour problems in the classroom, resulting in poor academic performance (Amato, 2001, 2005; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Lansford et al., 2006). School-based intervention programmes addressing these issues may help to reduce behavioural problems and assist in improved academic performance (Emery et al., 1999).

Research has found that school-based interventions to some degree help counter the adverse effects divorce may have on children and can lead to improved post-divorce resilience, resulting in improved outcomes following the stress of the break-up (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985; Richardson & Rosen, 1999; Stolberg & Mahler, 1994). Graham (2004) points to the potential contribution school-based interventions can make to help children become more resilient in the face of adverse life events such as divorce. Dawson-McClure, Sandler, Wolchik, and Millsap (2004, p.175) refer to such intervention programmes as “resilience resources” as they moderate the expected effects of risk on the outcomes. In support of this view, Pedro-Carroll (2001) states that just as wellness can erode under adverse conditions, so it can be enhanced by naturally occurring or designed processes. Schools can provide such supportive and structured designed processes in the form of school-based group support for children, which can provide protection from severe stress and assist in providing competence-building resources, that is, promoting resilience. Studies done by Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985) and Alpert-Gillis, Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1989) have shown that preventive measures that focus on building problem solving, positive thinking, effective coping styles, clarifying misconceptions about divorce, framing

realistic appraisals of control, and accurate attributions for parental problems, are associated with better adjustment in school-aged children.

Richardson and Rosen (1999) made several recommendations based on school intervention programmes as designed by Stolberg and Mahler (1994) and Pedro-Carroll, Alpert-Gillis and Cowen (1992). An intervention programme should develop strong support systems for children, particularly parents, teachers and peers. Parents can be involved through the completion of questionnaires, parent meetings and parent-child interactions. Similarly, teachers can recommend children for a programme, rate their behaviour and or academic achievement and provide additional classroom support (Pedro-Carroll et al., 1992; Stolberg & Mahler, 1994). Goldman and King (in Richardson & Rosen, 1999) in particular included a strong teacher component in their programme. Their justification is that teachers spend a great deal of time with the children and are in a position to provide consistent support to them.

Goldman and King (in Richardson & Rosen, 1999), Pedro-Carroll (2005), and Stolberg and Mahler (1994) all regard peer support within the intervention group as critical as it provides a supportive environment that helps children realise that they are not alone and normalises children's feelings of and experiences with divorce.

Richardson and Rosen (1999) further suggests that intervention programmes should also focus on skills building, which includes activities that help children express their feelings, acquire coping skills and improve interpersonal relationships. The skills incorporated by the programme designed by Stolberg and Mahler (1994) have been shown to significantly reduce internalising and externalising behaviours in programme participants. To help reduce the stress of divorce and enhance a child's

ability to gain control over the situation, the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (Pedro-Carroll et al., 1992) allocates several sessions teaching children problem-solving skills. In their school-based intervention programme, Goldman and King (in Richardson & Rosen, 1999) incorporated skills so that children can express themselves, identify support systems and deal effectively with parental conflict.

Richardson and Rosen (1999) and Haine et al. (2003) propose that evidence-based intervention programmes should be delivered with fidelity (i.e., as described in the manual) and if necessary, be adapted to the institution where it is implemented. Haine et al. (2003) provide evidence that fidelity of implementation of an intervention programme is an important predictor of its effectiveness when delivered in community institutions such as schools. It may, however, sometimes be necessary to adapt programmes to meet local conditions. There is evidence that adaptations that do not change core components of the programme, but add to them, may yield improved outcomes. This suggests that striking an appropriate balance between fidelity and adaptation is likely to contribute to effective intervention programmes (Haine et al., 2003). Furthermore, Morris and Fitz-Gibbon (in Haine et al., 2003) regard intervention programmes as complex mobilisations of human activities and resources that vary significantly from one locale to another, embedded and influenced by the political and social networks in which they operate. Intervention programmes should therefore not exist in isolation, perfectly appropriate for scientific measurement and duplication, but be amendable to fit local conditions.

Pedro-Carroll (2005) provides a number of guidelines for effectively implementing children's programmes in practice:

- A children's programme with an evidence base of effectiveness, which focuses on children's strengths should be utilised.
- A primary factor in group composition and programme content should be the children's developmental needs.
- A safe and supportive group environment should be created by establishing rules and setting limits on inappropriate behaviour.
- Skills training in factors relating to better adjustment in the aftermath of divorce should be provided.
- Group members should be selected carefully and referrals for children needing more intensive services should be provided.
- Attempt to keep groups balanced by age, gender and limit the number of participants. More than eight in a group reduce opportunities for meaningful sharing.
- Convey a message of hope and confidence in children's strengths and abilities.
- Conduct evaluation as part of an ongoing process to assess a programme's effectiveness with diverse groups.

2.9 The Children of Divorce Intervention Programme

The Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (CODIP) is a school-based, preventively oriented group programme which was developed to help children cope more effectively with possible academic, behavioural, and emotional problems brought about by their parents' divorce (Pedro-Carroll, 1994).

Pedro-Carroll (1994, p. 1) states that the programme's two main goals are to:

1. Reduce the stress of parental divorce by providing a supportive group environment in which children can identify and share feelings associated with divorce, clarify common misconceptions and reduce feelings of isolation.
2. Build competence by teaching specific skills (e.g. how to solve personal problems and express anger appropriately) that help children cope with the many challenges posed by parental divorce.

The programme was designed to meet the specific psychological and developmental needs of 9 –12 year olds. According to Pedro-Carroll (1994), children who are experiencing divorce at this age often experience a sense of shame and find it difficult to express the anger they feel. The six hierarchical divorce-related coping tasks children have to deal with and which feature in the programme are:

1. Acknowledging the reality of the divorce and achieving a realistic cognitive understanding of it.
2. Disengaging from parental conflict and resuming the child's agenda.
3. Resolving the many losses that divorce imposes.
4. Resolving problems of anger and self-blame.
5. Accepting the permanence of divorce.
6. Achieving realistic hope about one's future relationships.

In addition to the abovementioned developmental tasks, the programme consists of three major content components as specified by Pedro-Carroll (1994):

1. A focal affective component designed to help children identify and express divorce-related feelings and to share common experiences.

2. A skill-building component to teach children ways to resolve interpersonal problems and to express anger appropriately.
3. A final segment designed both to enhance self-esteem and facilitate a smooth termination from the group process.

2.10 Overview of the Programme

Part I: Focus on Feelings

The first three sessions of the programme deal with affective components surrounding divorce. The main aim of these sessions is for the participants to build support through sharing common divorce-related feelings and experiences. Part one also focuses on clarifying children's common misconceptions about divorce-related issues through discussion and encouraging them to talk about their anxieties. During these first three sessions particular emphasis is placed on making children aware of diverse family structures and helping them to accept a change in their family structure.

Part II: Enhancing Coping Skills

Sessions four to nine seek to equip children with social problem-solving skills to deal with personal problems pertaining to their parents' divorce independently and creatively. The acquisition of problem-solving skills during these sessions can help children replace feelings of helplessness and frustration with a feeling of mastery and competence. Group members are encouraged to share, give feedback and offer alternative solutions to problems; finding comfort in the realisation that they are not alone with their problems.

Part III: Focus on Families, Self-Esteem and Ending the Group Experience in a Positive Way

During Part III children are helped to understand the complexity of relationships and the acceptance of different family forms is promoted. Children learn to distinguish between 'solvable' and 'unsolvable' family problems and how to deal with family problems that are within their control by applying the problem-solving skills discussed in earlier sessions. Session 11 highlights the fact that although parental divorce brings about many changes, some may be positive. This exercise helps children identify sources of hope - an aspect often overlooked during marital breakup. Children's self-worth and individual strengths are highlighted through feedback from peers and leaders. In the last session children are encouraged to identify and seek out people who can provide support after the group ends.

2.11 Evaluation Research of the CODIP

Grych and Fincham (1992) regard the CODIP as the most extensive evaluated school-based intervention programme for children. According to Pedro-Carroll (2005), CODIP has been evaluated extensively with six controlled studies conducted since 1982. Significant programme effects on internalising and externalising problems for participants were found compared with delayed-treatment control groups during an experimental trial of CODIP (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985). A further three trials showed significant positive effects on internalising and externalising problems, competence, and divorce adjustment compared with non-randomised, no treatment control groups (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989; Pedro-Carroll et al., 1992).

In an evaluation of the CODIP performed by Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985), teacher ratings indicated that programme participants showed a decline in shy/anxious problems and a reported increase in adaptive assertiveness and frustration tolerance when compared with control groups. This evaluation also revealed a greater decrease in learning problems and an increase in peer sociability and rule compliance for the programme group when compared with the control group. A significant factor that could have had an effect on the results of this study is that ten sessions were conducted with the experimental group, but the children from the control group were seen only for a condensed five-week programme due to time constraints imposed by the end of the school year. Although the experimental and control groups both received treatment, the control did not benefit from a full ten-week intervention.

In the evaluation of a 16-week adaptation of CODIP for young urban children, children in the intervention group exhibited greater improvements in coping abilities, problem-solving and feelings about self and the family than the control group. Parents reported significant increases in programme children's overall adjustment. Teachers reported significant improvements for participants in school competencies, but not problem behaviours. The reason Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) provided for the last finding was that the programme emphasised skill building and did not directly address the issue of classroom behaviour problems. Grych and Fincham (1992) point out that in both these studies, children's self-perceptions and attitudes about the divorce did not show significantly different changes across the groups.

A limitation both the abovementioned studies had in common was that the psychometric properties of several key outcomes measures had not yet been fully

established (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989; Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985). Generalisability of the findings of these two studies is limited due to the fact that data on children's adjustment were provided by raters (teachers and parents) who were aware of the children's group status and who had a direct stake in the outcomes of the programme. Responses may therefore in part reflect the raters' common expectancies (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985). Grych and Fincham (1992) explain that it is difficult to eliminate rater bias as it is difficult to keep the identity of the children in the group secret from teachers, and to keep it from parents is unethical. It is also worth noting that all the evaluations conducted were performed by the programme developer and her colleagues.

Parents and teachers should be aware that children may not necessarily possess the innate abilities or supportive relationships to assist them with the social and emotional challenges that they may face when divorce occurs in their families. Such an awareness should encourage further investigation into evidence-based school interventions that promote understandings, attitudes and skills that enable children to cope with present challenges and have hope for the future (Graham, 2004).

2.12 Aim of this study

The Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (CODIP) was developed for American children of divorce and with their needs in mind. The main aim of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of the school-based Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (CODIP) in the context of South African schools. More specifically, this study was designed to determine whether programme components

such as problem-solving, communication and an anger control skills improved participants' ability to cope adaptively with challenges posed by their parents' divorce in comparison with a delayed intervention control group.

2.13 Hypotheses

This study was designed to test two specific hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1

Participation in the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme will promote children's understanding of divorce-related concepts and enhance positive perceptions of the self and the family.

Hypothesis 2

The Children of Divorce Intervention Programme will be effective in improving behavioural, emotional and social adjustment of children of divorce.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

3.1 Setting

The intervention programme was conducted at two socio-economically advantaged English-medium boys only schools in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. School A previously served families from the advantaged White population. However, since 1994 there have been significant changes in the make-up of the school and it is now more representative of families from other population groups. The school accommodates learners from Grade 1 to Grade 7. There are four classes in each grade with a maximum of 26 learners in each class. The school has approximately 52 educators, which include remedial educators, art educators, music educators and an educational psychologist who led the implementation and running of the intervention programme.

School B is an independent South African educational institution which aims at pupils realising their full potential through a well rounded education, rooted in the Christian faith. The school accommodates 520 learners from Grade 0 to Grade 7, with three classes at each level and a maximum of 25 learners per class. The school has 31 educators, which also includes a Youth Pastor and a counsellor. Parents receive regular reports on the progress of their children and Housemasters are available for any problems that may need special attention. The counsellor at School B conducted the programme.

3.2 Sample

All the participants were boys ranging from ages 10 to 14. A list of divorced families was obtained through the schools' databases. The participants were recruited by providing written information about the study and the programme to all divorced parents whose children were in Grades 4 to 7 (Appendix B). From the list of 40 divorced parents at School A, a total of 22 parents gave written consent for their children to participate in the programme (Appendix B). The counsellor at School B provided divorced parents with the same written information (Appendix B), requesting consent for their sons' and their own participation in the programme.

The participants from School A were randomly assigned to an experimental group ($n = 11$) and a delayed intervention control group ($n = 11$). All 7 participants from School B formed a second experimental group which was combined with the experimental group from School A for the purpose of analysing the data but not for the intervention itself. Letters were sent to the parents informing them whether their sons were randomly selected for either the experimental group (Appendix C) or the delayed intervention control group (Appendix D). Because two participants from School A moved to another town at the start of the new school year and another two went to high school and did not return their post-programme questionnaires, all data analyses for children were based on 16 participants in the experimental group and 9 in the control group. The mean age for the experimental group was 12 years, 6 months ($SD = .94$) and 11 years, 6 months ($SD = 1$) for the control group.

One teacher at School A did not return his post-programme responses and therefore data analyses for teacher-completed questionnaires were based on 15 boys from the experimental group and 9 from the control group. Although parents consented to their own and their sons' participation in the programme, there was a poor response in returning the post-programme questionnaires. After a phone call and written requests for the return of the questionnaires, only 18 (62%) parent-completed questionnaires (experimental, $n = 12$; control, $n = 6$) were returned and employed in the data analyses.

3.3 Measures

The measures employed for this study consisted of two parts. The first set of measures was used to assess children's perceptions of themselves as individuals affected by their parents' divorce, their families and the divorce process itself. It is the aim of the three components of the CODIP to specifically change these domains. The second set of measures was used to assess overall adjustment changes in children as a result of programme participation.

3.3.1 Children's Perceptions

3.3.1.1 Children's Understanding of Divorce

The Children's Beliefs about Parental Divorce Scale (CBAPS; Kurdek and Berg, 1987)

The CBAPS is a 36 – item yes/no scale designed to determine children's appraisals of divorce-related events, which may affect their adjustment to the divorce (Kurdek & Berg, 1987). The measure contains six items for each of six belief domains that were

selected on the basis of problematic beliefs such as thoughts of being abandoned by the custodial parent, expectations of peer ridicule and rejection, perceptions of having to hold the family together, believing that improved behaviour will lead to parental reconciliation, and blaming one parent for the divorce (Kurdek & Berg, 1987). The subscales are: Peer Ridicule and Avoidance, Paternal Blame, Fear of Abandonment, Maternal Blame, Hope of Reunification and Self Blame. Lower scores on the subscales reflect more negative beliefs about parental divorce, whereas higher scores reflect a more positive perception by the child of the parents' separation.

Psychometric analyses of the CBAPS yielded acceptable levels of internal consistency for the six subscales. Most of the item-total correlations were moderately high (range=.15 - .65; $M = .46$), and the alpha coefficients ranged from .54 - .78 ($M = .70$). The test-retest data indicated moderate stability at a level similar for other self-report measures of children's psychological functioning. For the Peer ridicule and Avoidance, Paternal blame, Fear of Abandonment, Maternal blame, Hope of Reunification, and Self-blame subscales, the respective Pearson correlations ranged from .41 to .72 ($p < .01$) over a 9-week period. The correlation for the total scale was .65 ($p < .01$) (Kurdek & Berg, 1987).

3.3.1.2 Perceptions of Self

Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC; Harter, 1985)

The SPPC was developed to determine children's domain-specific judgments of their competence as well as a global perception of their self-esteem or self-worth. Harter (1985, p.5) based the construction of the SPPC on the assumption that "providing separate measures of one's perceived competence in different domains, as well as an

independent assessment of one's global self-worth, would provide a richer and more differentiated picture than those instruments providing only a single self-concept score". The present version includes six separate subscales tapping specific domains, as well as global self-worth.

The specific domains included in the SPPC are: Scholastic Competence, Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, Physical Appearance and Behavioural Conduct.

The aim of the Global self-worth subscale is to encourage children to think about the global perception of their worth as a person instead of inferring it from the average of their responses to the other subscales (Harter, 1985). For the purpose of this study, only the social acceptance, behavioural conduct and global self-worth subscales were included as the other subscales were irrelevant to the goals of the CODIP.

Children rate each self-description (6 items per subscale) on a 4-point scale.

Psychometric data suggest that the measure is appropriate for boys and girls in Grades 3 to 9 and for group administration (Stolberg & Mahler, 1994). Factor analysis supports the validity of the subscales across ages. Test-retest reliabilities ranged from .69 to .87 (Harter, 1985).

3.3.1.3 Perceptions of Family

The Parent-Child Interaction Questionnaire – Revised - Child Version

(PACHIQ-R-CH; Lange, Evers, Jansen, & Dolan, 2002)

The PACHIQ-R-CH is designed to assess how children view their relationship with their parents (Lange, Evers, Jansen & Dolan, 2002). The items contained in this questionnaire focus on attitudes as well as the behavioural attitudes between the

parent and the child and is based on the behavioural family therapy principle which emphasises the assessment and change of concrete behaviours, cognitions and emotions (Lange et al., 2002).

The PACHIQ-R-CH consists of two subscales: the Conflict Resolution subscale and the Acceptance subscale. A high score on the Conflict Resolution subscale indicates that the child feels that the parent deals well with conflict and is willing to take responsibility. The items on the second subscale refer to the child's positive feelings toward the parent (Lange et al., 2002). Lange, Blonk, and Wiers (1998) present support for the validity of the PACHIQ-R-CH in the form of high correlations between the PACHIQ-R-CH and other assessments of parents' and children's functioning, such as the Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR). Cronbach's alphas of the scales were found to be satisfactory (child-mother: acceptance = .88; authority = .76; total = .90). Lange et al. (1998) report that internal consistency of the PACHIQ-R-CH is high (.78 to .95), while test-retest reliabilities were also found to be satisfactory.

3.3.2 General Adjustment

Employing measures included in CODIP, children's overall adjustment was assessed from the perspectives of teachers (Teacher-Child Rating Scale, AML Behaviour Rating Scale-Revised), and parents (Parent-Child Rating Scale). In addition, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was used to provide an independent measure of children's adjustment from the perspective of the children themselves, their parents and teachers.

Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS 2.1; Perkins & Hightower, 2002)

The questionnaire consists of 32 items in which four primary and eight secondary domains of a child's socio-emotional adjustment are measured. The four areas assessed in the primary domains are: (1) task orientation, (2) behaviour control, (3) assertiveness, and (4) peer social skills. Within each primary scale four items are measured for positive competency behaviours and four items measure negative problem behaviours (Perkins & Hightower, 2002). Table 1 lists the internal consistencies for the primary T-CRS 2.1 scales, thus supporting the reliability of the measure.

Table 1: Alpha Reliabilities for the T-CRS 2.1 Primary Scales (n=700)

SCALE	COEFFICIENT ALPHA
Task Orientation	.94
Behaviour Control	.90
Assertiveness	.87
Peer Social Skills	.94

(Perkins & Hightower, 2002, p. 21)

Perkins and Hightower (2002) established content validity of the T-CRS 2.1 by comparing 160 children matched on sex, race, socio-economic status, locale of the school and grade. The scores of an 'at risk' and 'random' sample were compared. Item comparisons showed that children at risk scored significantly lower ($p < .001$) than the random sample; indicating the sensitivity of the 32 items to problem behaviours and competencies exhibited by children at risk.

Additional support for the validity of the T-CRS 2.1 was obtained by comparing its scores to scores on the Child-Behaviour Checklist-Teacher Report Form (TRF). The

T-CRS 2.1 was designed to measure areas that also appear in the TRF, such as problems with social skills and attention problems. High correlations were found on scales measuring the same constructs, with low correlations on scales measuring different constructs.

AML Behaviour Rating Scale – Revised (AML-R; Primary Mental Health Project, 1995)

The AML-R is described as a 12-item screening tool for teachers to assess acting out behaviours (A-scale), moodiness (M-scale), and learning difficulties (L-scale) (Kauffmann et al., 1996). Teachers rate AML-R items based on their observations of the child during class time on a five point scale from 1 (never) to 5 (most or all the time), which represents the frequency that those behaviours have been observed in the previous month (Primary Mental Health Project, 1995). Higher scores indicate a greater incidence of problem behaviours, while lower scores indicate greater well-being.

The reliability and validity of the AML-R as a screening device for the maladaptive behaviours of children has been demonstrated by Gillespie and Durlak (1995). The Primary Mental Health Project (1995) reported alpha reliabilities for the AML-R total score at .93 or greater. Only the sum of all 12 items (total score) was used in this study by the PMHP.

The Parent-Child Rating Scale (P-CRS 5.0)

The P-CRS is a 39-item measure that assesses children's behavioural, social and emotional functioning from a parent's perspective on a five-point Likert scale to

measure the amount of agreement with each item. No further information about this scale was available at the time of this study. The research department at the Children's Institute in New York, who developed the CODIP, is currently working on the P-CRS manuscript which will be completed soon (C. Walker, personal communication, February 2, 2009). The decision to include this measure in the study was based on the use of earlier versions in similar studies and its availability from the Children's Institute as part of the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme package.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1999)

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire with 25 attributes, some positive and some negative. The 25 items are divided between 5 scales of 5 items each, generalising for conduct problems, hyperactivity-inattention, emotional symptoms, peer problems, and prosocial behaviour (Goodman, 1999). All but the prosocial behaviour subscale are summed to generate a total difficulties score. Higher scores on the prosocial subscale reflect strengths, whereas higher scores on the other four subscales reflect difficulties in these areas (Muris, Meesters, Eijkelenboom & Vincken, 2004). The three versions of the SDQ employed in this study were the self-report, the parent report and the teacher report. A study done by Van Widenfelt, Goedhart, Treffers, and Goodman (2003) revealed that the internal consistency of the teacher SDQ is good and the parent and self-report SDQ have acceptable internal consistencies (.27 to .35) that are comparable with the internal consistencies of similar measures such as the Child Behaviour Checklist (.34).

3.4 Procedure

Permission to implement the programme at the two schools was obtained from the principals at both schools. Because School A is a State school, permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (Appendix A). One week before the programme was due to start, the questionnaires listed in the previous section were administered. The boys were called to a central venue in the school. Before they started completing the questionnaires, the reasons for the study and the process was explained to them. They were also told whether they formed part of the experimental or control group. Confidentiality of both verbal and written responses was emphasised. The boys were given an opportunity to ask questions to clarify any possible misconceptions.

Each boy was given a sealed envelope containing the parent questionnaires and asked to hand it to their parents for completion. Parents were informed whether their son was in the experimental or delayed intervention control group. Teachers were also given a sealed envelope with the relevant questionnaires and a covering letter explaining the purpose of the study. Teachers were not informed whether a boy formed part of the experimental or control group.

Hourly group sessions were conducted on a weekly basis during school time. At School A, these sessions were conducted during assembly time. This ensured that participants did not miss out on any academic work as a result of attending the programme, and it was also a time when their absence were least noticed by their peers and teachers. However, assembly was cancelled twice, which meant the session

for that week was also cancelled. The sessions at School B were conducted an hour before school on a Friday, which brought about its own set of problems such as parents not dropping the boys off on time.

At School A the CODIP was run by the school's resident educational psychologist with the researcher sitting in as an observer; making notes of every session. The educational psychologist and researcher met after every session to discuss the progress and interactions of the group members. At School B the resident school counsellor conducted the programme. She made comprehensive notes after each session on the progress of each child in the group. Each week a session was sequentially carried out as stipulated in the Manual. The programme presenters planned and prepared for the next session on a weekly basis in order to maintain high programme fidelity.

Three months after the final session, the same process of completing the questionnaires was followed for both the experimental and control groups. This period of time was selected to establish whether the programme had lasting effects. Parents whose children formed part of the experimental group were asked for written feedback and they were also invited to contact the programme presenters should they like to discuss their children's general progress. Post-programme completion of the questionnaires took place at the start of a new school year. The participants therefore had new teachers who were not aware whether the child in question had received the intervention or had been part of the control group.

The delayed-intervention control group received no intervention after the completion of the pre-programme questionnaires. While the experimental group attended their weekly sessions, the control group attended assembly with the rest of the school. The control group received the intervention only after the post-programme questionnaires were completed.

University of Cape Town

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of this research. The primary objective of this study was to determine whether participation in the CODIP resulted in improved emotional stability, social interaction and behavioural conduct among children. Another objective was to assess the impact of the programme on children's perceptions of themselves, their families and the divorce process, as individuals affected by their parents' divorce.

Pre-intervention scores were subtracted from post-intervention scores to obtain the mean difference scores for all scales and subscales for the experimental and control groups. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the mean difference scores using the obtained data from children, parents and teachers. Because of the small sample size, the experimental groups from the two schools were combined into a single group for the purposes of these analyses. Alpha levels were set at .05 for all analyses.

4.2 Children's Perceptions

Tables 2 and 3 summarise the results for questionnaires completed by children from both the experimental and the control groups one week before and three months after administering the intervention to the experimental group only. Perceptions of the family and divorce related events were determined by the completion of the CBAPS

(Table 2) and the PACHIQ (Table 3). Children's perceptions of self were assessed with the SPPC (Table 4), which measured children's self-perceptions of their social acceptance, behavioural conduct and global perceptions of self-worth.

Table 2: One-way ANOVA results for Children's Beliefs about Parental Separation (CBAPS)

Variable	Experimental group			Control Group			F-ratio	P-value
	n	Mean difference	SD	n	Mean difference	SD		
Full scale	16	-0.16	1.17	9	0.19	1.27	2.75	.10
Peer ridicule and avoidance	16	-0.50	1.27	9	0.56	1.42	3.67	.07 [†]
Paternal blame	16	-0.19	1.17	9	0.22	2.28	0.36	.56
Fear of abandonment	16	-0.19	0.75	9	0.00	0.50	0.45	.51
Maternal blame	16	0.06	0.77	9	-0.22	0.83	0.74	.40
Hope of reunification	16	-0.06	1.89	9	0.22	0.67	0.19	.67
Self-blame	16	-0.06	0.93	9	0.33	1.32	0.77	.39

p < .10

Table 3: One-way ANOVA results for Parent-Child Interaction Questionnaire (PACHIQ)

Variable	Experimental group			Control Group			F-ratio	P-value
	n	Mean difference	SD	n	Mean difference	SD		
Full scale	16	1.28	7.64	9	0.56	6.31	.12	.74
Conflict resolution	16	2.89	9.01	9	0.33	7.37	.83	.37
Acceptance	16	-0.31	5.84	9	1.44	5.34	.55	.46

The mean differences for the full-scale scores of the CBAPS (Table 2) and the PACHIQ (Table 3) suggest a trend towards improvement in perceptions of family and divorce related events in the experimental group. This implies a reduction in

problematic beliefs about divorce and improved perceptions of parent-child relationships. However, the child-completed questionnaires yielded no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups with regard to the difference between pre- and post programme scores. The only marginally significant result is reflected in the Peer Ridicule and Avoidance subscale of the CBAPS questionnaire ($p = .07$). The mean difference scores from participants in the experimental group indicate a decline in their experience of peer ridicule and avoidance from pre- to post- test whereas the control group experienced an increase in peer ridicule and avoidance (Table 2).

Table 4: One-way ANOVA results for the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC)

Variable	Experimental group			Control Group			F-ratio	P-value
	n	Mean difference	SD	n	Mean difference	SD		
Social Acceptance	9	1.80	5.00	9	0.40	2.50	0.60	0.50
Behavioural Conduct	9	-1.60	4.00	9	1.50	4.30	2.32	0.20
Global Self-worth	9	1.80	5.02	9	-2.00	5.21	2.32	0.20

Note: The reduction in sample size of the experimental group is because post-completion of this questionnaire was not done by School B.

The mean differences for the full-scales scores of the SPCC (Table 4) suggest a trend towards improvement in the experimental group. However, these child-completed questionnaires yielded no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups with regard to the difference between pre-and post programme scores.

4.3 General Adjustment

4.3.1. Children's Scales

Children from both the experimental and control groups completed one questionnaire to determine their general adjustment before and after administering the intervention to the experimental group only. The SDQ (Table 5) assessed general adjustment changes in the participants of this study.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA results for Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Variable	Experimental group			Control Group			F-ratio	P-value
	n	Mean difference	SD	n	Mean difference	SD		
Total problems	16	-0.13	1.90	9	-0.10	2.22	.03	.87
Emotional symptoms	16	-0.31	1.92	9	-0.33	2.40	.01	.98
Conduct problems	16	-0.19	1.94	9	-0.44	1.88	.10	.75
Hyperactivity	16	0.06	2.17	9	0.11	2.85	.002	.96
Peer problems	16	-0.69	1.54	9	-0.22	1.92	.44	.51
Prosocial behaviour	16	0.94	1.98	9	0.56	1.42	.26	.62

The mean differences for the full-scales scores of the child-completed version of the SDQ (Table5) suggest a trend towards improvement in the experimental group.

However, these child-completed questionnaires yielded no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups with regard to the difference between pre-and post programme scores.

4.3.2. Teacher Scales

Teachers completed three questionnaires based on their perceptions of the children's general behaviour, task orientation and peer interaction at school. The T-CRS consists of 32 items which measure a child's adjustment. The AML-R assesses acting out behaviours, moodiness, and learning difficulties. The SDQ assesses positive and negative behavioural traits. All but the prosocial behaviour subscale are summed to generate a general difficulties score. Results for the questionnaires completed by teachers are displayed in tables 6 to 8.

Table 6: One-way ANOVA results for Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS)

Variable	Experimental group			Control Group			F-ratio	P-value
	n	Mean difference	SD	n	Mean difference	SD		
Full scale	15	1.97	5.25	9	-0.75	5.20	6.07	0.02*
Task orientation	15	2.40	7.90	9	0.22	4.74	0.55	0.47
Behaviour control	15	0.80	2.73	9	-1.78	5.61	2.31	0.14
Assertiveness	15	1.13	4.76	9	-0.67	5.12	0.76	0.39
Peer social skills	15	3.53	4.1	9	-0.78	5.90	4.40	0.05*

* p < .05

Table 7: One-way ANOVA results for AML-R

Variable	Experimental group			Control Group			F-ratio	P-value
	n	Mean difference	SD	n	Mean difference	SD		
Full scale	15	-1.48	2.91	9	-0.11	3.10	3.48	.07 [†]
Acting-out	15	-1.14	2.18	9	-0.78	2.11	0.16	.70
Moody-shy-withdrawn	15	-2.21	2.46	9	-0.22	3.03	3.01	.10
Learning Difficulties	15	-1.07	3.87	9	0.67	3.94	1.09	.31

[†] p < .10

Table 8: One-way ANOVA results for Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Variable	Experimental group			Control Group			F-ratio	P-value
	n	Mean difference	SD	n	Mean difference	SD		
Total problems	15	-0.43	1.91	9	0.20	1.40	2.95	.08 [†]
Emotional symptoms	15	-0.67	1.91	9	0.78	1.3	3.98	.06 [†]
Conduct problems	15	0.53	1.51	9	0.33	1.73	0.09	.77
Hyperactivity	15	-0.53	3.02	9	0.33	1.73	0.61	.44
Peer problems ^a	15	N/A	N/A	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Prosocial behaviour	15	0.73	2.38	9	0.89	1.97	0.02	.87

[†] $p < .10$

^a) The mean difference score for both groups on this measure was 0.

Full-scale results from The Teacher-Child Rating Scale (Table 6) yielded a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Teachers' ratings of the experimental group's socio-emotional adjustment improved from pre-programme to post-programme whereas those of the control group declined slightly. The Peer Social Skills subscale also reflected a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Results indicate that the experimental group showed an improvement in their peer social skills whereas the control group's scores for this subscale declined. The full -scale score of the AML-R yielded marginally significant results (Table 7). The experimental group showed a slightly greater reduction in problems than the control group. Table 8 indicates marginally significant results in the SDQ total problems score and the Emotional Symptoms subscale with regard to the change from pre- to post-programme scores. The scores of the experimental group indicate a reduction in emotional symptoms and total problems

while the emotional symptoms and total problems of the control group increased slightly.

4.3.3. Parent Scales

Parents completed the Parent-Child Rating Scale (P-CRS) and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to report on their child's general behaviour, interaction with his peers and task orientation at home. The P-CRS is a 39-item measure that assesses children's behavioural, social and emotional functioning from the perspective of the parent. The SDQ assesses positive and negative behavioural traits. All but the prosocial behaviour subscale are summed to generate a general difficulties score. Results of the parent scales are presented in tables 9 and 10.

Table 9: One-way ANOVA results for Parent-Child Rating Scale (P-CRS)

Variable	Experimental group			Control Group			F-ratio	P-value
	N	Mean difference	SD	n	Mean difference	SD		
Full scale	12	1.08	3.30	6	-0.02	2.32	3.90	0.05*
Peer social skills	12	-0.25	2.80	6	0.50	1.23	0.40	0.54
Task orientation	12	2.50	2.91	6	-0.20	2.50	3.70	0.07 [†]
Disposition	12	0.33	2.96	6	0.20	2.60	0.01	0.91
Shy-anxious	12	1.83	5.51	6	0.50	2.60	0.31	0.59
Assertive social skills	12	0.42	2.10	6	0.67	3.08	0.04	0.84
Frustration tolerance	12	1.42	1.83	6	-0.67	1.37	6.01	0.03*
Negative peer social skills	12	1.33	3.28	6	-1.17	2.93	2.48	0.14

* $p < .05$

[†] $p < .10$

Table 10: One-way ANOVA results for Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Variable	Experimental group			Control Group			F-ratio	P-value
	n	Mean difference	SD	n	Mean difference	SD		
Total problems	12	-1.40	2.22	6	0.05	0.90	8.10	0.01*
Emotional symptoms	12	-1.00	2.40	6	-0.20	1.10	0.51	0.50
Conduct problems	12	-0.20	0.90	6	0.80	1.10	3.73	0.07 [†]
Hyperactivity	12	-1.50	1.63	6	-0.20	0.50	2.80	0.12
Peer problems	12	-2.90	2.81	6	-0.20	0.45	4.43	0.05 [†]
Prosocial behaviour	12	0.10	0.94	6	0	1.22	0.03	0.90

* p < .05

[†] p < .10

Analysis of the full-scale P-CRS (Table 9) revealed a statistically significant difference from pre- to post- programme results between the two groups. The experimental group showed an overall improvement in behavioural, social and emotional functioning from pre- to post-programme compared to the control group. Results for the individual subscales indicated a statistically significant increase only for the Frustration Tolerance subscale. The experimental group showed an increase in their frustration tolerance levels from pre- to post programme while the control group's frustration tolerance levels decreased. A marginally significant difference from pre- to post- testing between the two groups was also shown in the Task orientation subscale. The results indicate that the experimental group became more task-oriented after participation in the programme whereas the control group's ability to focus on the task at hand decreased slightly.

Table 10 shows that there was a significant difference in the SDQ total problems scores between the pre- and post-programme scores for the experimental and control groups. This indicates a decline in problem behaviours for the experimental group compared to the control group. Results for the individual subscales indicated a marginally significant trend towards a reduction in conduct problems and peer problems for the experimental group compared to the control group.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview

The main goal of this study was to establish whether participation in the programme would promote children's understanding of divorce-related concepts and enhance positive perceptions of the self and the family through programme participation.

Another aim was to determine whether the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme would be effective in improving the behavioural, emotional and social adjustment of South African children of divorce.

Hypothesis 1 of this study predicted that participation in the programme would promote children's understanding of divorce-related concepts and enhance positive perceptions of the self and family. However, results from the Children's Beliefs about Parental Separation (CBAPS, Table 2), Parent Child Interaction Questionnaire (PACHIQ, Table 3), and the SPPC (Table 4) measures showed no support for this. Only the Peer Ridicule and Avoidance subscale of the Children's Beliefs about Parental Separation (CBAPS) revealed a marginally significant improvement by the programme group from pre-to post intervention scores. This suggests some measure of improvement in participants' perceived social adjustment after programme participation. The more positive results of this subscale can possibly be attributed to the cohesion that was established within the group and participants realizing they are not alone. Group members felt that they could express their anxieties and emotions freely with their peers without judgment or ridicule. As one parent commented, "I

think the ‘fellowship’ with other boys who have been through the same thing was the best part for my son.” These statistically insignificant results from the questionnaires completed by children from both the experimental and control groups indicate that essentially the intervention appeared to have very little effect on children’s self-rated perceptions of and adjustment to divorce.

Pedro-Carroll and her colleagues provided two extensive evaluations of the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme in the USA (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989; Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985). In the first evaluation (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985) children’s self-perceptions and their attitudes about divorce did not show any significant changes across groups (Grych & Fincham, 1992). However, children taking part in the second evaluation (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989) reported more positive feelings about their parents, families and themselves, and their ability to cope successfully with problems than did the control group. Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) attributed the positive findings in their study to a structural change in presenting the programme. Meetings were held once a week for four months rather than twice a week for two months as was the case with the Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985) study. Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) argue that the more distributed pace may have helped children to acquire and consolidate key programme concepts. The more positive results from the Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) study could also have been a reflection of the larger sample - and therefore much greater statistical power – in the second study. In contrast, results from this study, like those of Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985), showed that children who participated in the programme reported no statistically significant behavioural, emotional or social adjustments, improved understanding of divorce, or enhanced positive perceptions of the self and the family compared to the

control group who did not receive the intervention. The Challenge Model of Children's Adjustment to Parental Divorce suggests that children may develop certain skills or abilities to meet the challenges brought on by their Parents' divorce. As a result of mastering these skills, children may also develop new self-cognitions (Gately & Schwebel, 1991). With this model in mind and the mean time since divorce at five and seven years for the experimental and control group respectively, it is possible that the lack of significant results can be attributed to the fact that most participants had already developed and mastered certain skills to help them cope with their parents' divorce.

Results from the questionnaires completed by the children also did not support the Hypothesis 2 of this study, which stated that participation in the programme will improve the behavioural, emotional and social adjustment of children of divorce. In contrast to the child-completed questionnaires which yielded no significant outcomes, results of the teachers' and parents' ratings of children's general adjustment to divorce indicated that compared to the control group, the programme group showed significant improvement in their behavioural, emotional and social adjustment after programme participation. These results support Hypothesis 2 of this study, which states that programme participation will be effective in improving behavioural, emotional and social adjustment of children of divorce. The full-scale result of the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS, Table 6) as well as the Peer Social Skills subscale of this measure reflected a statistically significant improvement for the programme group compared to the control group. Full-scale scores of the AML-R (Table 7) and the SDQ (Table 6) yielded marginally significant improvements in favour of the programme group. The only subscale of the teacher-completed SDQ to

have shown a marginally significant improvement for the programme group over the control group was the Emotional Symptoms subscale. Although the British Columbian report on Children's Programs on Divorce and Separation (2003) cautions against bias from respondents (such as teachers and parents), which may lead to inflated responses because they were aware of the status of the children being tested, teachers in this study were not aware of the participants' group status at any stage of research and therefore completely unbiased in their responses. In both the first evaluation (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985) and second evaluation (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989) teachers reported a decrease in the programme group's shyness and anxiety levels as well as a decline in acting out behaviours. Combined results from the two evaluation studies further indicated that teacher ratings showed that children from the programme group exhibited an increase in adaptive assertiveness, frustration tolerance, task orientation and peer social skills (Grych & Fincham, 1992). These findings correspond with the results of the teacher-completed results from this study

The outcomes of the parent-completed measures indicate a significant improvement in children's general adjustment through participation in the programme. The full scale scores of both the P-CRS and the SDQ revealed a significant overall improvement in the program group's adjustment compared to the control group. Subscale scores indicating a significant improvement for the programme group compared to the control group include the Frustration Tolerance subscale of the P-CRS and the Peer Problems subscale of the SDQ. Marginally significant improvements were recorded for the Task Orientation (P-CRS) and Conduct Problems (SDQ) subscales. These results were illuminated by parents' comments. For instance, "He is not 'angry' as

much and as short tempered as he had been. He is very 'happy' these days and talks about his day at school, whereas before it was always 'Ok, Mom.' (Appendix E).

The results from the parent-completed questionnaires whose children formed part of the experimental group perceived their children to have benefitted behaviourally, socially and emotionally after the completion of the 12-week intervention programme. Post-programme informal written feedback from parents also suggested that children were less angry and frustrated and more communicative after programme participation (Appendix E). However, some measure of caution should be considered. As parents had a direct stake in the programme outcomes, positive findings may in part reflect respondents' common positive expectancies (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989). Statements in both parent questionnaires were self-explanatory and it is possible that parents of children who participated in the programme could have manipulated their responses at post-programme completion of the questionnaire to ensure a positive outcome. Parent responses from the Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985) and Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) studies showed that parents whose children participated in the programme felt there was a greater increase in their children's overall adjustment. Particular significant improvements were children's ability to solve problems independently, less angry outbursts and a decrease in problem behaviours (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989; Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985). Findings in the current study largely correspond with results from these earlier studies. Results showed a greater increase in participants' overall adjustment, especially increased task orientation, improved frustration tolerance levels, fewer conduct problems and improved peer relations.

Measures employed in this study included questionnaires supporting the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (T-CRS, AML-R and P-CRS), but also a broader range of measures to assess children's general adjustment (SPPC and SDQ) and divorce related attitudes (CBAPS, PACHIQ). Compared to measures employed in this study to assess children's behavioural, emotional and social adjustment as well as their perceptions of divorce, various other measures were employed in the Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985) and Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) studies to assess the same outcomes. Child-completed questionnaires used by Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985) and Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) to assess children's behavioural, emotional and social adjustment included Harter's 28-item Perceived Competence Scale, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAIC), and the Child-Rating Scale (CRS). General adjustment measures completed by teachers included the Classroom Adjustment Rating Scale (CARS), the Health Resources Inventory (HRI), and the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS). Parents completed the 14-item Parent Evaluation Form (PEF) which was specifically developed for the Pedro-Carroll and Cowen study (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985) and then also employed in the Alpert-Gillis et al. study (1989). Divorce-related attitudes in both studies were measured through the child-completed CASP (Children's Attitudes and Self-Perceptions) and the Children's Divorce Adjustment Scale (CDAS). Parents completed the Parent Evaluation from (PEF). Although different measures were employed in this study compared to the measures used by Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985) and Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989), similar findings were obtained on children's understanding and perception of divorce-related concepts as well as children's behavioural, emotional and social adjustment after their parents' divorce. This presents a convincing argument that the Children of

Divorce Intervention Programme can be particularly successful in improving children's adjustment to the divorce situation.

Another significant difference between this study and the studies done by Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985) and Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) is the smaller sample size. In this study most results are based on an experimental group of 16 and a control group of 9. All data analyses for the Pedro-Carroll and Cowen (1985) study were based on 40 participants in the experimental group and 32 in the control group. The study conducted by Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) included a total of 185 children, and therefore had much greater power than the current study. This may help to explain why the results from the three groups of respondents – children, teachers and parents – reflected mixed results.

5.2 Limitations of this research

The biggest limitation of this study is the nature of the sample. The sample size was small ($n=25$), predominantly white, upper-middle to upper-class and consisted of boys only. A low response rate from parents returning post-programme questionnaires resulted in a smaller available sample size for the analyses of these questionnaires, and could be a source of bias in the results. With a larger sample of children in South Africa, non significant and marginally significant results may become statistically significant. The lack of representativeness in the study sample also limits the extent to which these findings can be generalised.

Because of the difficulty in obtaining an adequate sample size of respondents at the two schools involved, the time elapsed since divorce was not considered for participation in the study. The time lapse between parental divorce and this study may have influenced some children's memory and changed their perceptions when completing the questionnaires (Gately & Schwebel, 1981).

The study relied on adjustment data provided by children and parents who were aware of the subjects' participation in the study. Although teachers were not aware of the participants' group status at the time of completing the questionnaires, expectancy effects may have influenced the children's and parents' completion of the questionnaires. Although such ratings are certainly relevant to a comprehensive programme evaluation, Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) caution that they are susceptible to bias.

5.3 Future Research

It is recommended that further evaluation research is employed to determine exactly how many sessions of the intervention programme are required to produce positive changes and which specific activities facilitate achievement of the programme goals. Evaluation research is particularly necessary in regard to children's perceptions of divorce related concepts and events, which seems to show the least improvement in this study as well as in previous studies (Grych & Fincham, 1992).

While there is widespread support for intervention programmes for children of divorce (Stolberg & Mahler, 1994, Pedro-Carroll, 2001, 2005), most research includes

only a programme group or a programme and control group. However, much has been said about the formation of strong group cohesion and the effect of participants sharing their positive or negative experiences, anxieties and misconceptions with other group members (Lesowitz, Kalter, Pickar, Chetick & Schaefer, 1987). Masten and Coatsworth (1989) also found that the presence of friends to confide in, attachment to school or a close relationship with an adult other than the parents may serve as protective factors for children experiencing divorce. Apart from the programme and control groups a third, informal discussion group should therefore be investigated. Post-programme outcomes of the experimental and the discussion group should reveal whether there is a difference between informally discussing divorce related issues with peers compared to participating in a structured intervention programme.

5.4 Conclusions

According to the results of this study, there was no statistically significant improvement in children's perceptions of divorce related concepts and events after participation in the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme. However, the results from teacher and parent reports indicated some improvement in children's general adjustment after receiving the intervention.

Methodologically, this study has improved on previous evaluation studies (Alpert-Gillis et al., 1989; Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 1985) in so far that teachers' ratings were unbiased. Teacher-raters were blind to the participants' group status at both pre- and post-completion of the relevant questionnaires, making the outcomes of these

measures more significant. In the evaluation study done by Alpert-Gillis et al. (1989) children were not assigned randomly to groups. For the purpose of this study children from school A were randomly assigned to a experimental and delayed intervention control group.

Measures employed in this study included a broader range of questionnaires than suggested by the Childrens' Institute for use with the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme. These include the CBAPS, PACHIQ, SPCC and SDQ. The results from the teacher and parent measures indicate that some of the programme aims had been achieved, resulting in the improved behavioural, emotional and social adjustment of the participants.

The outcomes of this study suggest that although more research needs to be done with girls and low SES schools in South Africa, the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme could be introduced as an effective psycho-educational tool in other South African schools to improve the behavioural, emotional and social adjustment of children of divorce.

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APPENDICES

University of Cape Town

Appendix A: Letter of Approval (Western Cape Education Department)

Navrae
Enquiries Dr RS Cornelissen
IMibuzo
Telefoon
Telephone (021) 467-2286
IFoni
Faks
Fax (021) 425-7445
IFeksi

Verwysing
Reference 20070713-0038
ISalathiso



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISEbe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mr Cornelius Botha
SACS Junior School
Private Bag
NEWLANDS
7700

Dear Mr C. Botha

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE EVALUATION OF AN INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN OF DIVORCE.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **16th July 2007 to 21st September 2007**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December 2007).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the following school: **South African College Junior School (SACS)**.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Education Research
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: **16th July 2007**

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /
NCEDA UBHALE IINOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALELWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK X9114, KAAPSTAD 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

INBELSENTRUM /CALL CENTRE

INDIENSNEMING- EN SALARISNAVRAE/EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY QUERIES ☎0861 92 33 22
VEILIGE SKOLE/SAFE SCHOOLS ☎ 0800 45 46 47

Appendix B: Consent to participate in the study

Dear Parents

I am a teacher at School A and am currently writing a dissertation towards my M.Soc. Sci. degree in Psychology at the University of Cape Town. Part of my research is to conduct and evaluate a school-based intervention programme for children of divorce.

Research done on school based intervention programmes suggest that these type of interventions can help counter the adverse effects of divorce on children. These programmes can positively influence post-divorce adjustment, such as improved behaviour, academics, social skills and self-esteem (Pedro-Carroll & Cowen, 2005; Richardson & Rosen, 1999; Stolberg & Mahler, 1994).

Permission has been obtained from Mr. A as well as from the Western Cape Education Department to run the **Children of Divorce Intervention Programme** at the school. The resident educational psychologist will run the programme with me. The programme is due to start early next term during assembly time.

I would like you to study the information attached carefully and consider giving consent for your son to participate in this internationally award winning programme. Please contact me should you require additional information regarding any aspect of the programme or visit: <http://www.childrensinstitute.net/programs/>

Yours truly,

C.J. Botha
(0824620100)

Dr. L. Wild
(Supervisor)

THE CHILDREN OF DIVORCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME (CODIP)

The objectives of CODIP incorporate several individual protective factors, and links research findings on children's adjustment to divorce into the programme content. (Pedro-Carroll, 2005). The programme strives to foster a supportive group environment through creating an atmosphere in which children can share their experiences. Feeling safe that what they say will be respected and knowing that all information shared is confidential is a major objective throughout the programme. As divorce can trigger complex feelings and emotions that children may find difficult to comprehend, the programme employs a variety of games and activities to help children identify, appropriately express, and regulate a range of emotions.

Another objective of the programme is to increase children's accurate understanding of family changes and to clarify divorce-related misconceptions. Programme leaders strive over the course of several sessions to reduce children's fears of abandonment, feelings of responsibility for the divorce, and unrealistic fantasies about their responsibility for restoring the marriage. Role plays are used to increase participants' ability to attribute the divorce to external factors, rather than internalising feelings of responsibility for their parents' marital problems.

Several sessions focus on teaching children social problem solving and interpersonal skills. They are also provided with appropriate ways to express anger through the use of games and activities to help them learn the skills and apply them in real life. Through the acquisition of these skills, children's capacity to cope with the many changes and challenges associated with divorce are enhanced and they are given the sense of control over situations in which they may otherwise feel helpless. Children are taught to differentiate between problems that they can and cannot control, which can assist them in mastering the psychological task of disengaging from inter-parental conflict and redirect their energies to age appropriate pursuits.

The final unit in the programme focuses on the strengths of children and their families in an effort to enhance positive perceptions of self and family.

Children are encouraged to consider any positive changes that may have occurred in their families and are assisted in identifying people to whom they can go to for support after completion of the programme.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the programme, you, your child and his teacher will be asked to complete a series of brief questionnaires before and after the programme about your child's behaviour, emotions and social relationships.

University of Cape Town

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, parent/legal guardian of

.....

hereby give consent for my son in my care to participate in the research study that is to be conducted by Cornelius J. Botha as part of his Psychology Masters Programme at the school my son is attending.

Please tick (☆) next to each statement:

- ☐ I am aware that the focus of this research is evaluating a school-based
- ☐ programme for children of divorce.
- ☐ I have been informed, in a language I can understand, of the aims and implications of the study.
- ☐ I understand that whatever information my son will provide will remain strictly confidential and that he will remain anonymous in the process.
- ☐ I understand that he undertakes to participate voluntarily and that he is able to withdraw from the programme at any time without being prejudiced against in any way.
- ☐ I understand that due to the nature of the research selection process, my child may not be eligible for selection to participate in the programme.

Year divorced/separated	
-------------------------	--

.....

Parent / Legal guardian's signature

.....

Date

Appendix C: Letter to Parents of Experimental Group

Dear Parent

Thank you once again for giving consent for your son to participate in this study.

Your son has been randomly selected to form part of Programme Group.

The programme will commence on Monday, 23 July. You are most welcome to contact me at any time during the duration of the 12 week course to discuss any aspect regarding your son's participation in the programme.

Please complete the questionnaires you have received and return them to the office at your earliest convenience.

Regards

CJ Botha

(0824620100)

Appendix D: Letter to Parents of the Delayed Intervention Control Group

Dear Parent

Thank you once again for giving consent for your son to participate in this study.

Your son has been randomly assigned to the Delayed Control Group.

This implies that questionnaires will be filled out by your son, his teacher and yourself, before and after the 12 week duration of the programme, but he will only actively participate in the CODIP programme at the start of next year. The reason for this is that the Western Cape Education Department does not allow any research programmes to commence during the fourth term; as they feel that pupils have to prepare for their end of year examinations.

I am ethically bound to run the actual programme with every child in the Delayed Control Group who still wishes to do so.

Participation in the Delayed Control Group is as important as the Programme Group, as outcomes from the two groups will be compared to assess the effectiveness of the programme.

Please complete the questionnaires you have received and return them to the office at your earliest convenience.

You are welcome to contact me should you have any questions.

Regards

CJ Botha

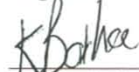
Appendix E: Examples of Feedback from Parents

Dear Parent

Thank you once again for allowing your son to participate in the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (CODIP) last year.

Your son has completed the follow-up questionnaires. Would you please be so kind as to complete the follow-up Parent Questionnaires you have received and return them to the office at your earliest convenience. Your feedback about your son's participation in the programme will be appreciated and add value to my study.

Regards



Kandas Botha

(0824620100)

1. Do you think your son benefited from participating in the programme?

SIGNIFICANTLY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SOMEWHAT	NOT REALLY
---	----------	------------

2. Do you feel that a programme such as CODIP should be run on a regular basis at schools?

YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO
---	----

3. Would you encourage friends who are divorced to sign their child up for CODIP?

YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO
---	----

4. If possible, please indicate how you feel the programme benefited your son.

- R discovered that other children
- ① have also learnt to cope with divorce - not only himself -
- ② It helped him try to solve some problems
- ③ He found it difficult to cope (he told me) once the course had finished.
- ④ A follow-up would benefit R enormously. It was a fantastic course and helped him see his way a little more clearly. Many thanks for your hard work.

Dear Parent

Thank you once again for allowing your son to participate in the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (CODIP) last year.

Your son has completed the follow-up questionnaires. Would you please be so kind as to complete the follow-up Parent Questionnaires you have received and return them to the office at your earliest convenience. Your feedback about your son's participation in the programme will be appreciated and add value to my study.

Regards



Kandas Botha

(0824620100)

1. Do you think your son benefited from participating in the programme?

SIGNIFICANTLY	SOMEWHAT	NOT REALLY
---------------	----------	------------

2. Do you feel that a programme such as CODIP should be run on a regular basis at schools?

YES	NO
-----	----

3. Would you encourage friends who are divorced to sign their child up for CODIP?

YES	NO
-----	----

4. If possible, please indicate how you feel the programme benefited your son.

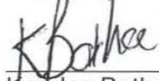
I think the "fellowship" with other boys who have been through the same thing was the best part of this for K

Dear Parent

Thank you once again for allowing your son to participate in the Children of Divorce Intervention Programme (CODIP) last year.

Your son has completed the follow-up questionnaires. Would you please be so kind as to complete the follow-up Parent Questionnaires you have received and return them to the office at your earliest convenience. Your feedback about your son's participation in the programme will be appreciated and add value to my study.

Regards



Kandas Botha

(0824620100)

1. Do you think your son benefited from participating in the programme?

SIGNIFICANTLY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SOMEWHAT	NOT REALLY
---	----------	------------

2. Do you feel that a programme such as CODIP should be run on a regular basis at schools?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	NO
---	----

3. Would you encourage friends who are divorced to sign their child up for CODIP?

YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO
---	----

4. If possible, please indicate how you feel the programme benefited your son.

He seemed to become far more expressive
with his feelings and talked more.
He was not 'Angry' as much and as
'short' tempered as he had been.
He is very 'happy' these days and
talks about his day at school,
whereas before it was always 'ok!' more
Thanks